

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

August 29, 2018

The Honorable James P. McGovern
Ranking Member
Nutrition Subcommittee
House Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. McGovern,

You know I have long worked for the inclusion of the Northern Mariana Islands in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. When we served together on the Agriculture Committee, this was my primary focus and resulted in \$32.5 million for the Marianas SNAP Pilot Program, Section 4031 of the Agricultural Act of 2014.

My goal for the farm bill now under consideration had been to extend the pilot program or, ideally, bring the Marianas into SNAP. Unfortunately, the Marianas Commonwealth government and the Agriculture Department had taken their time in ramping up the pilot program. In response to my efforts to extend funding for the pilot, Republicans on the Agriculture Committee responded it was unnecessary and rightly pointed to \$22.5 million in unspent funds.

I raised a ruckus at home about the delayed spending and took flak for doing so. But the result was that benefits were raised in May and just this week it was announced income thresholds would be lifted. Higher benefits. More families fed. These are good outcomes.

What that means for program finances, however, is that the pilot will be broke after 2019. Then, benefits will drop and families will be cut from the program.

Although the farm bill is now in conference and thus closed to new material, I write to alert you to this pending problem and will forward to you new financial projections, when I have received them from the Food and Nutrition Service of USDA.

I would also ask that, if it becomes necessary for me to introduce stand-alone legislation adding the Marianas to SNAP, I will be able to count on your support going forward — as you have given it in the past. You could be especially important to this cause, if you take the Nutrition Subcommittee gavel in the next Congress.

Thank you for working with me on getting the Marianas into SNAP.

Sincerely,



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